of politics and recommended certain amendments to the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The Commission recommended insertion of a new section 8B in the Act for providing that a person against whom charge has been framed under certain provisions of laws such as sections 153A and 171E to 171-I of the Indian Penal Code and sections 10 to 12 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 shall be disqualified for a period of five years from the date of framing of such charge. In this connection, the Election Commission of India had convened a meeting of recognized National and State political parties on 29.04.2000 to discuss the proposal in the all-party meeting held on 13.09.2001 but again no consensus could be arrived at. Further, in the all-party meeting held on 02.08.2002, a draft Bill was circulated providing for disqualification of persons against whom charges concerning heinous offences have been framed by competent court of law in two separate criminal proceedings. The said proposal had to be giving up on account of absence of consensus among political parties as it was apprehended that such a provision could be misused against the political parties.

The Government attaches high importance and serious concern in the matter. However, any action in this regard would depend upon the outcome of the public debate and consensus amongst the political parties. The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice is also currently examining all aspects of electoral reforms.

The Anand Marriage Act, 1909

820. SHRI TARLOCHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Anand Marriage Act for the Sikhs was enacted by Government in 1909;

(b) whether the Act is still in operation as it has never been repealed; and

(c) if so, whether Sikh marriages could still be registered under this Act?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI K. VENKATAPATHY): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Anand Marriage

Act, 1909 was enacted to remove doubts as to the validity of marriage ceremony common among Sikhs. The said Act does not lay down any substantive law with respect to registration of marriages. Sikhs are considered as Hindus under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 which provides for registration of a Hindu Marriage. Section 8 of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 has empowered the State Governments to make rules relating to registration of marriages, and as such, State Government regulates the registration of Sikh marriages under the provisions of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

National Conference of Law Ministers and Law Secretaries

821. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Conference of Law Ministers and Law Secretaries was held recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the outcome thereof;

(d) whether his Ministry had also called for comments from the States on the Bill regarding establishment of gram Nyayalayas or village courts across the country to provide justice at the grassroot level;

(e) if so, the response of each States received so far; and

(f) the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) to (c) The Ministry of Law and Justice convened a National Conference of Law Ministers and Law Secretaries at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on 18th December, 2005 to consider the proposal for a Parliamentary legislation to set up Gram Nyayalayas in the country. The Conference favoured a legislation giving access to speedy and inexpensive justice at the grassroots level to the common man and accordingly adopted a Resolution, a copy of which is placed as Statement (*See* below). The proposal is at inter-ministerial consultation stage.